

## Students Bring Meaning to Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data

*“This process makes the data come alive, with students who are engaged in making choices between risky and healthy behaviors. The students doing the analysis were energized by the discussion - pushing beyond the numbers to find their true meaning and exploring the implications of this.”*

Bob McNamara, Superintendent  
Washington West Supervisory Union

The YRBS Student Analysis project, funded by the Department of Education, is an opportunity for students to take a lead in bringing meaning to their own survey data and taking steps to strengthen their school and community based on their findings.

Over the past two years, leadership teams of students and teachers from nine Vermont high schools have participated in this initiative. They have received training to 1) organize day retreats for students to analyze the data, producing a “Student Executive Summary” which identifies three strengths, three areas of concern and a preliminary plan of action, 2) organize Dialogue Nights to share the “Student Executive Summary” with the greater community, and 3) frame next steps, which the group implements in the second half of the school year to address identified concerns and build on existing strengths. This project was recently re-funded and there is an opportunity for six high schools to be involved in the coming year. This will coincide with the fall 2009 release of new data.

It is very important that the adults and students involved are an existing group, which sees the YRBS analysis work furthering their mission or goals. Examples are:

- A community prevention group which already has a student leadership team and a local school partner
- A school nurse, working with a sub-committee of student government
- A SAP person and their VTLSP group
- A health teacher who uses this as a component of the curriculum

### **The benefits of being involved include:**

1. Each school participates in the full day orientation training (late September) and dialogue night training (mid-fall) free of cost.
2. Each participating school receives \$250 as discretionary money to fund the work (food at meetings, retreat costs, support for costs related to action steps, etc.).
3. On-going consultation is provided for adult and youth coordinators.
4. Networking youth groups across schools, committed to a common goal, including showcasing the work at a spring state-wide conference.

### **The responsibilities of being involved include:**

Creating a leadership team (5-7 students, 1-2 adults) responsible for the project as a whole. Their core responsibilities include:

- A. attending the two trainings noted above,
- B. organizing the YRBS Student Analysis Retreat and Dialogue Night,
- C. spearheading the action steps identified through this work, over the spring and
- D. participating in a spring conference to showcase the work.

If you are interested in participating in this project or just want to know more, please contact Helen Beattie, Ed.D., project coordinator, at [hnbbeattie@aol.com](mailto:hnbbeattie@aol.com) or (802) 472-5127.